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ABSTRACT

The Intern Training Program in the Learning Assistance Center (LAC) at California State University, Long Beach, represents a systematic training program for college reading/study skills specialists. The internship consists primarily of participants processing information on the rationale, operations, and procedures of a Learning Assistance Support System (LASS) and experiencing personal learning skills development through diagnosis and prescriptive exercises and materials. The training program is competency based. Some of the competency tasks require interns to become acquainted with various academic aids and catalogs available at the LAC; to understand the relationship of these aids to the LASS tutorial program; to participate in a county fair which is designed to orient potential users to LASS programs and equipment by doing; to familiarize themselves with all the hardware and software in the LAC; to take an audio tour of the university library; to assume responsibilities of a LAC aide, which include such tasks as opening and closing the center, familiarizing themselves with the LASS referral system, and attending two or more weekly staff meetings. Each of the competency tasks is briefly described at the end of the report. (TO)

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CSULB INTERN TRAINING IN LEARNING ASSISTANCE

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Frank L. Christ (2), in his article, "Preparing Practitioners, Counselors, and Directors of College Learning Assistance Centers: An Intensive Graduate Workshop," mentions the paucity of available literature on training programs for college reading/study skills personnel in proportion to the amount of other published college reading/study skills materials.

He cites two articles, Fry (1964) and Carter and McGinnis (1970) in the Yearbooks of the National Reading Conference; three articles, Wolfe (1966), Cooper (1969), and Colvin (1969) in the Yearbooks of the College Reading Association; an article by Kinne (1962) in the North Central Reading Association publications; four articles, Maxwell (1970), Joffe (1970), Ahrendt (1971), and Beldin (1971) in the proceedings published by the Western College Reading Association; and two other sources, Price and Wolfe (1968) and Kaznierski (1971), all of which deal with training programs.

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These articles and a perusal of recent available literature reflect a focus primarily on the training of reading instructors; and hence, support a strong feeling that there are in existence very few training programs for college reading/study skills specialists per se, and no programs for personnel who function in what Christ (4) describes as a systems approach to learning assistance.

The Intern Training Program in the Learning Assistance Center at California State University, Long Beach, however, represents a systematic training program for college reading/study skills specialists who function as learning assistance facilitators.

Background/Rationale of Training Program

CSULB's Learning Assistance Support System--LASS (an Outreach Program of Counseling Services) under the coordination of Frank Christ began its intern training in learning assistance in the fall of 1973. The internship experience was designed to acquaint participants with a dimension of counseling that attempts to mobilize all existing resources available to help the learner learn more in less time with greater ease and confidence. The internship consists primarily of participants processing information on the rationale, operations, and procedures of a Learning Assistance Support System and experiencing personal learning skills development through diagnostic and prescriptive exercises and materials.

The program serves both M.S. in Counseling graduate students who are interning in the CSULB Counseling Center and California State University and

College personnel who want exposure to a learner-centered Outreach Counseling Services Program. Counseling Center interns spend eight hours weekly for six weeks in the program; while participants from colleges and universities in the CSUC system experience a special and intensive forty hour-five day training program.

Since October, 1973, eight M.S. in Counseling interns and a total of eight individuals from the CSUC System (2 from CSU, Chico; 2 from CSU, Fresno; 2 from CSC, San Bernardino; 1 from CSU, San Diego; 1 from CSC, Sonoma) have participated in the training program.

Description of Training Program

The training program is competency based. (c.f. "Competency Tasks Descriptions" at conclusion of this article.) First, interns take the Learning Assistance Center 12-minute orientation tour and read several articles that detail the rationale upon which the LASS is based. Interns are asked to keep a log of their reactions and questions as they complete each competency task. During the training, they interface regularly with LASS training personnel. During these regularly scheduled conferences, questions are answered and a general exchange of ideas takes place.

One of the next tasks is the Imaging Potential Memo in which interns imagine that it is the last day of their LASS intern training. From this memo, one is able to get some notion of what specific expectations each intern has of the training program. The training can then be adapted if necessary to insure that individual needs are met.

Following the Imaging Potential Memo, interns get involved in additional information processing tasks such as reading the project proposals for 1972-73 and 1973-74; reading the Survey of Reading/Study Efficiency (SR/SE) Counselor Manual (1); reading a paper reflecting the LASS concern for cost-effectiveness and accountability (5); and reading evaluations of the Learning Assistance Center (LAC) by outside professionals (6) (8).

Interns then experience taking the SR/SE (3) and sampling several modules which comprise their personal and individualized programs established during the SR/SE intake interview with a counselor. This personal experience with the SR/SE, in addition to viewing a videotape of an actual SR/SE intake interview, will enable interns to assist counselors with intake interviews and eventually handle their own SR/SE intakes with proficiency.

Other competency tasks require interns to become acquainted with various academic aids and catalogs available at the Learning Assistance Center; to understand the relationship of these aids to the LASS tutorial program; to participate in a county fair which is designed to orient potential users to LASS programs and equipment by doing; to familiarize themselves in a "hands-on" fashion with all the hardware and software in the LAC; to take an audio tour of the University library; to assume responsibilities of a LAC aide, which include such tasks as becoming familiar with opening and closing procedures, the LASS referral system, and attendance at two or more weekly staff meetings.

Interns also take field trips to local community colleges and CSUC campuses to become more acquainted with other learning assistance facilities. El Camino

Junior College and Rio Hondo Junior College were the target locations for most field trips.

Upon completion of these competency tasks, interns will have established enough background to have meaningful conferences with those Learning Assistance facilitators outside the LAC, i.e., Director of Learning Resources, Director of Student Development Programs, and the Dean of Counseling and Testing.

For the final competency task, interns complete a report/critique on their internship experience. They are asked to use the following four items as an outline for their report:

(1) What has the LASS intern experience done for me?

(2) How am I different as a result of this experience?

(3) Have my attitudes toward learners been affected by this experience? How? Why?

(4) What has prevented this experience from becoming more effective for me? How could the training be improved?

Evaluation

From the reports/critiques of the interns, the LASS Staff has been able to receive some valuable feedback concerning the efficacy of the training. Most interns in the program have felt that their training experiences in the LAC have been meaningful and worthwhile. The following are excerpts from reports/critiques submitted by interns at the end of the program:

1. What has the LASS intern experience done for me?

It has given me an overview of a successful Learning Assistance Center from which I can adapt appropriate portions for a proposed center at CSUC. (M.N.)

At the very least this experience has given me an opportunity to get acquainted with an outreach program of the Counseling Center with which I was unfamiliar. This experience has also provided me with insights into the importance of such a program as a support service for faculty and students. It has made me more aware of the need for individuals to learn how to learn and not only to develop but also maintain these personal learning skills as one factor in becoming a happy, effectively functioning individual. (N.F.)

The opportunity made us more aware and sensitive to the philosophy, functions, operations, staffing, equipment, etc. of an effective LAC program, and how it can or should fit into the overall program of services offered to our students. (M.P. and J.R.A.)

The entire intern program was a valuable source of knowledge and motivation. I sincerely feel that my concept of a learning center was developed during that week to the point where I can plan and initiate a meaningful program. (J.T.)

2. How am I different as a result of this experience?

As a result of this training I feel that I now possess a broader knowledge and awareness in this area of learning assistance. I had many assumptions and preconceptions about what a Learning Assistance Center was, and I found many of them to be wrong. (K.L.)

I feel competent to organize and administer an adaptation of the Long Beach Learning Assistance Center at CSUC. At this point, I have concrete information as to how to proceed. I also feel comfortable that in the future, if I have questions, I have a

reliable source to consult with. This is true primarily because I feel the Long Beach Center is a viable technique and one I could comfortably work within. (M.N.)

I find that I now have a clearer picture of the importance that technology plays in the learning situation and am relieved to know that this technology's role is counselor defined rather than counselor dictating. (K.C.)

I feel that as a result of this experience I am more emphatic about the importance of developing study skills. I have been able to perceive that the "bad" feelings of self on the part of many individuals who come to the Counseling Center are created by the problems they encounter in their not knowing how to "learn" and the failures which result thereof. (N.F.)

3. Have my attitudes toward learners been affected by this experience? How? Why?

Learners will take advantage of the opportunity to improve study skills if made aware of the opportunity. They are willing to have their skills surveyed and to invest time in learning how to improve in weak areas. With encouragement and individual assistance, students can rapidly progress through an individualized program. (M.N.)

The familiar statement, "Learning Assistance does not exist in a vacuum. It takes into account the world of the learner, the environment in which he studies, and with which he must cope to remain in college until graduation. This environment includes not only the physical learning environment but also the inner world of personal problems that impinge upon and affect an individual's attitude toward learning" has new meaning for me. It is now real and applicable and a part of my outlook and my approach. (K.C.)

My attitude about "learners" has definitely modified. I generally held the concept that a Learning Assistance Center is a place where "slow-learners" needed to improve their skills--therefore they came to a "remedial center." This, however, is not the case. A Learning Assistance Center is a place where <u>any</u> learner can go to improve and develop his skills in many areas. (K.L.)

4. What has prevented this experience from becoming more effective for me? How can the training be improved?

. . . The only minor drawback was one of my ability or inability to become oriented to the city and the pace of the LAC's personnel. (M.N.)

I felt the reading part of the competency tasks to be important, but I also felt that there was too much time involved in this activity when I would like to have spent more time in practically applying what I was learning. Part of the Center's philosophy is that in "doing" one tends to remember and learn. Well, I would like to have participated more as an observer in the counselor-counselee relationship and then as an <u>active</u> counselor. (K.L.)

The only recommendation I have for improvement would be that of either extending the period of training for possibly another week or two or keeping the six-week training period but increasing the number of competency tasks so that each intern either has the time (as would be the case in the first option) or can manage his time (second option) to fit into the training some very important activities, i.e., role-play an aide, supervisor and/or coordinator, role-play counselor and do at least three SR/SE intake interviews. I feel that these "tasks" would elicit more active involvement and expose the intern to more day-to-day functions of the LAC. (N.F.)

A suggestion that might be an improvement for the training is that all of the interns in training have a weekly conference among themselves. They might be able to offer suggestions and make improvements as a group. Oftentimes, just in talking to one another, we find that we share the same feelings on some things, and if we were to get together collectively, our ideas and feelings might prove quite beneficial. (D.Y.)

(1) Revise the competency task descriptions for direct use of week-long seminar participants. (2) Send materials, including reprinted articles, to participants one or two weeks prior to the intern experience for readiness purposes. (3) Provide an "Intern Log Form" for ease of recording reactions, questions, etc., to the various competency tasks. (J.R.A. and M.P.)

For future experiences, I suggest the elimination of the library tour, and the opening and closing procedures. This would allow interns more time with the counselors during the counseling sessions, something I truly desired. The doing part of the six-week program should begin as soon as possible, as this is where the real training occurs. (K.C.)

Conclusion

From the responses of individual participants in the program, one can conclude that the CSULB training in learning assistance has been well received. There are minor improvements, as suggested in the intern evaluations, which need to be made; but, in general, the training program has provided the experiences for one to become a competent college reading/study skills specialist or learning assistance facilitator. In fact, success with the CSULB training in learning assistance has provided the LASS staff with incentive to propose expansion of such training programs beyond the California State University and College System. Already the

Center has received requests to offer the training to out-of-state institutions. Since the CSULB Learning Assistance Support System sees itself in the role that Voegel (7) describes as an "innovation diffusion center," the probability exists that in 1974-75 the intern training program for Learning Assistance Center facilitators will expand to meet these regional and national needs.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH
LEARNING ASSISTANCE SUPPORT SYSTEM
COMPETENCY TASKS DESCRIPTION

1. INTERN LOG: For each of the training tasks that you do, keep an informal diary. Record your reactions and your questions. Don't forget to record data and get confirming signature for each task.

2. LAC 12-MINUTE ORIENTATION TOUR: An introduction to the Center that demonstrates the potential of technology to offer information in a dramatic and experiential mode. Consider how you could use this wireless headphone-induction loop for other counseling activities.

3. READINGS: FACT SHEET, SYSTEMS ARTICLE, CSULB ARTICLE: As you are reading, jot down any reactions to the material. Write out any questions you may have for later discussion in your weekly conferences. If you want to explore the references alluded to in the articles, note this for possible use as an open task.

4. IMAGING POTENTIAL MEMO # 1: Using the memo form in your training folder, imagine that it is the last day of your LASS intern training. It is all over. You have completed all 40 competency tasks. This memo is to be addressed to the Dean of the Counseling Center. Complete the memo. Be as specific as you can.

5. READING: PROJECT PROPOSAL 1972-73: As you read the proposal, jot down questions and reactions to its contents. Don't forget to read the four quarterly reports, including the appendices for each one.

6. READING: PROJECT PROPOSAL 1973-74: Again keep a record of your reactions and questions for use in a subsequent conference. Note the shift in emphasis for this second year of the LASS. Compare budgets. Look at the LASS operational projects' board in the supervisor's office and review the strategies and activities that are posted under each objective. If you would like to read the documents accompanying any objective, ask the supervisor for its file.

7. READING SR/SE COUNSELOR MANUAL: This is probably your introduction to a college level study skills survey. Read carefully the section entitled "Diagnosis and Application" (pp. 4-7). Note the amount of reference material that is available for in-depth study. Some of them are available either from the LAC or the University Library. Keep in mind as you study the manual that you will be taking the survey as one of your competency tasks.

8. SR/SE WITH INTAKE INTERVIEW: Ask the aide for the survey materials. After you have completed the survey (this includes making your profile and writing your response to it), have the aide make an appointment for you to meet a LAC counselor for the intake interview.

9. SR/SE VIDEOTAPE: A videotape of a SR/SE intake interview was made for your viewing. It will help you to become more familiar with what might take place when counselor and learner interface.

10. ASSISTING WITH SR/SE INTAKE INTERVIEW: It's your turn now to look at the counselor side of the SR/SE. Please remember that the SR/SE is only given when the learner is ready for it. Also, that the counselor must read the student's folder before he does the intake interview. Note that the program that results from the Survey and the interview is designed by the learner and counselor together.

11. INDIVIDUALIZED SR/SE ACTIVITIES: Try to sample at least two or three modules for each of the five SR/SE areas. When your training is over, remember that the LAC is still here if you want to continue to develop your personal learning skills.

12. LIBRARY WALKING TOUR: This is an audio tour of the University Library. You will need to sign out a shoulder-bag cassette player and tour cassette for this task. The tour takes 30-45 minutes and directs you to all five floors of the library.

13. OPENING AND CLOSING PROCEDURES: Make the rounds with an Aide or the Supervisor to see how a Center is opened and closed each day. These procedures are particularly necessary for Center security.

14. OVERVIEW ACADEMIC AIDS: These are located principally on shelves of the bookcase near the Language Master carrels. Our present collection of Academic Aids represents only a beginning. However, there are more shelved in the wooden cabinet near the files and in the cassette and filmstrip drawers. You will also find content study-reading kits as well as computation and math kits on the room divider near the entrance to the LAC Supervisor's Office.

15. OVERVIEW OF CATALOGS: Knowing what is available in Learning Assistance equipment and materials is vital to maintain currency and to promote growth of the LAC. The catalogs are kept in the Supervisor's office for reference by both LAC staff and faculty. Spend at least an hour browsing through a representative sample of them.

16. READING: DATA COLLECTION PAPER: This article can be found in the Visitors Reference Book. It was authored by Margaret Devirian, the LAC Supervisor. It reflects our concern for cost-effectiveness and accountability.

17. READINGS: MAXWELL AND WARK EVALUATIONS: Both of these consultant reports can be found in the Visitors Reference Book. As a result of each report, the LAC has modified its operational behavior. Each year the LAC plans to be evaluated by outside professionals. This year, a team of consultants from ETS will meet with LAC Staff to evaluate our evaluation procedures.

18. LAC EQUIPMENT CHECK: Technology is very much a part of Learning Assistance. In this task you will familiarize yourself in a "hands-on" way with equipment that is commonly found in a Learning Assistance Center. If you have any questions about the equipment, see an aide or the Supervisor.

19. MATERIALS CHECK: Software in the LAC is also very important. In this task, you will become acquainted with the various programs and materials available to the learner.

20. COUNTY-FAIR PARTICIPATION: Sometime during your training period, there probably will be a county-fair for a student or faculty group. This activity was designed by LAC staff to orient potential users to LAC programs and equipment by doing rather than by talking.

21. REFERRAL FORM SYSTEM: This system was designed to allow complete follow-up on all referrals made from the LAC. Have an aide or supervisor explain the procedure for this referral form.

22. TUTORIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: Lisa Messersmith is the coordinator of tutorial assistance. Please see her in regards to what services are offered for an individual seeking tutorial assistance and what procedures are necessary for a person to become a paid or volunteer tutor. Note that all tutoring for veterans is coordinated by Lisa.

23. WORKING AS A LAC AIDE: Aides are a very instrumental part of the LAC. They are usually the first contact a learner has with the center. Spend between 4 and 8 hours actually performing the aide's duties.

24-25. STAFF MEETING # 1: Every Monday, all LAC Staff meets during lunch. An agenda sheet is posted near the staff message center for anyone to suggest items for the meeting. During the meeting hours, the LAC is closed. Don't forget to bring your lunch.

26-31. WEEKLY CONFERENCES: You are scheduled for a weekly conference with the LASS Coordinator. This is your opportunity to get answers to any questions that may have occurred to you during the week. Bring your folder to the conferences.

32. FIELD TRIPS: Visiting learning assistance centers on other campuses is always a worthwhile experience and often presents new and possibly different outlooks to the learning assistance concept. Field trips will be arranged regularly to community colleges and other CSUC campuses in this area.

33-34. Your choice of tasks. See LAC Staff for ideas, if you have no preferences.

35. CONFERENCE WITH DEAN WEISBROD: During this 30-minute conference, you will have an opportunity to find out where the Learning Assistance Support System fits into Counselor Services as an Outreach Program.

36. CONFERENCE WITH LIBRARY STAFF MEMBER: During this conference, you will be briefed by a member of the library staff to learn about its relationship with the LAC.

37. CONFERENCE WITH DIRECTOR OF STUDENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS: This conference is designed to give you an opportunity to discuss Learning Problems of Minority Students and to see the working relationship that Student Development Programs has with the LASS.

38. CONFERENCE WITH DIRECTOR OF LEARNING RESOURCES: The LAC is part of the total learning resources available on our campus. However, it is specifically designed for the independent learner. Other components of learning resources are more concerned with faculty or with classroom supported instructions.

39. CONFERENCE WITH LAC SUPERVISOR: The LAC Supervisor is in charge of the Center's operations, including its aides, tutors, advisors, and counselors.

40. INTERN REPORT AND CRITIQUE: Using the following four questions as an outline, write a report on your internship experience with the Learning Assistance Support System. A copy of your report will be shared with LAC staff.

Q 1. What has the LASS intern experience done for me?
Q 2. How am I different as a result of this experience?
Q 3. Have my attitudes toward learners been affected by this experience? How? Why?
Q 4. What has prevented this experience from becoming more effective for myself? How could the training be improved?

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